

Commissioning peace officers for housing projects

SB 149 by Leedom (Yost)

- DIGEST:** SB 149 would have authorized cities with housing authorities to commission and employ peace officers to protect persons and property at housing projects.
- GOVERNOR'S REASON FOR VETO:** "This bill would authorize cities to commission peace officers to protect persons and property at housing projects operated by a housing authority within the city. Cities currently have the power to commission peace officers for their city police departments and may assign them to housing projects or any other location in the city. This bill would accomplish nothing that cannot be accomplished under existing law."
- RESPONSE:** Sen. John Leedom, the author of SB 149, said: "The worst that could happen under the governor's rationale is that the status quo would be maintained. In the meantime, testimony during the past two sessions of the Legislature has revealed that there is a need in public housing projects for security forces who possess the authority of a peace officer."
- "Because municipal police protection has generally been inadequate, housing authorities have employed private security officers. A private security officer has only the authority of any other citizen to make arrests, that is when a felony is committed in his presence or view."
- "Many law enforcement problems which occur in these projects are classified as misdemeanors, but nonetheless are most disruptive to good social order. These include drug related offenses, assault, theft, criminal mischief, unlawful carrying of weapons, prostitution, or even speeding, to name a few instances. By the time a security officer can summon a peace officer for assistance, the perpetrator has left the scene and is free to repeat his offenses at another time."
- "The language which the governor cites in her objection as 'accomplish(ing) nothing that cannot be accomplished under existing law' is a provision which was worked out by the city of Dallas and the Dallas Housing Authority in an agreement acceptable to both precisely to accomplish something both needed and desirable to both."

"I regret that Governor Richards has taken this shortsighted action which will deny equal police protection from residents of the state's housing authorities."

NOTES:

SB 149 passed the House on the Consent Calendar and was not analyzed in a *Daily Floor Report*.